

Green Seattle Initiative: Questions & Answers

Q. What is the public forest, and why is it at risk?

Sixty percent of Seattle's forested parks and green spaces are infested with English ivy. Unchecked, ivy and other invasives can cripple whole ecosystems.

- Ivy shades foliage, deprives bark of air, adds thousands of pounds of weight to host trees and eventually kills trees.
- Forests infested with ivy fail to regenerate, pushing out native trees and understory plants along with all the bugs, birds and animals that thrive in healthy forests.

Q. What has Seattle been doing about it?

In 1994, Seattle Parks Department started a forest restoration effort, completing about nine acres/year. However, the forests are so heavily infested experts predict that – without substantially increasing restoration efforts – 70% of Seattle's forests will essentially be ecological deadzones within the next twenty years.

Q: Why is the public forest important?

An in-City forest that is healthy and thriving is truly special and beautiful. But, beyond the natural aesthetic benefits, it also delivers significant environmental and economic benefits. Healthy forests and trees:

- provide oxygen and absorb greenhouse gases
- reduce stormwater run-off and improve water quality in streams and lakes
- provide critical habitat for various birds and animals including eagles
- add value to neighborhoods
- create more opportunities for hiking and walking

Q: What is the Green Seattle Partnership and how does it help solve the problem?

Seattle is partnering with the Cascade Land Conservancy, Washington's leading land conservation group, to raise public awareness and attract increased financial and volunteer resources.

- The goal of the Partnership is to, within the next two decades, remove ivy, replant and restore the most at-risk 2500 acres of Seattle's public forests.
- It's a big goal and the Partnership will be working closely with many community organizations to make it happen: Earth Corps, the Washington Native Plant Society, Seattle Urban Nature Project, Seattle Audubon and – of course – the people who live and work in Seattle.

Q: What are the other benefits of the Green Seattle Partnership?

- Community building – volunteers will invest thousands of hours of work in this initiative to help restore forests.
- Through partners like Earth Corps, youth training and employment opportunities valued at over \$500K annually.

Q: Won't ivy still be a problem on private property?

Because birds eat the fruit of ivy, seeds get dispersed and areas get re-infested. To help make our restoration work last, property owners throughout Seattle and King County are encouraged to get rid of any ivy on trees and in yards.

Q: What are the projected costs, and who will pay for what?

- Not including the enormously valuable volunteer hours the Partnership will attract, restoring 2500 acres is estimated to cost \$40 million to \$50 million – or \$16,000 to \$20,000 per acre. This cost estimate is based on restoration work already done by Seattle Parks Department and Earth Corps.
- On a per acre basis, it is a fraction of what Mercer Island proposed on a recent ballot initiative.
- The cost of NOT acting is one that we can't afford. Losing more than half our Parks forests would cost many millions of dollars of lost "natural" stormwater retention and air pollutant removal capacity, lost property values as well as a critical part of our City's heritage.
- The City's start up funding will be matched by CLC.
- Through 2006, at least \$600,000 of City funds are earmarked for pulling ivy and planting native trees and plants – and the Partnership's campaign is planned to double or triple that amount.

Q: The Mayor's Green Seattle Initiative includes grants for neighborhood greening projects. Is this new funding?

No. Rather, the City will make greening projects a priority in existing grants programs such as the Neighborhood Matching Fund and the Neighborhood Business District Support Program.

Q: What does "greening the built environment" mean?

It means that we want to explore ways to encourage commercial developers to include things like green roofs and natural drainage in their projects. In other words, better ways for high quality construction to blend in with and reduce the impact on the natural environment.

Q. More information?

- Seattle's Office of Sustainability and Environment – 206-615-0817
- Cascade Land Conservancy -
- Seattle Parks Urban Forestry Program: 206-233-5019
- King County Noxious Weed Control Program – 206-296-0290
 - <http://dnr.metrokc.gov/weeds>
- Washington Native Plant Society, Ivy OUT program 206-527-3210
 - <http://www.ivyout.org/>